

## VOLUNTEERS EARN AWARDS, RECYCLED MONEY FOR SERVICE

by Michael Dhar

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*Read about all the award winners and nominees in the 2004 Volunteer Awards Banquet Event Program!*

DES MOINES - Honored for protecting the environment they love, natural resources volunteers from across Iowa received awards Saturday, Nov. 13 for outstanding service.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources recognized both nominees and winners at the Fourth Annual DNR Volunteer Awards Banquet. Handing out plaques, certificates, and pencils made from reclaimed money, the DNR thanked volunteers for their unpaid, but highly valuable work.

Limited budgets and staff make volunteers a vital part of the DNR, officials said.

"We can't pay you monetarily, but hopefully you realize the difference that you're making," said Merry Rankin, director of the DNR's Keepers of the Land volunteer program. "There are streams all over the state that are cleaner, there are all sorts of wildlife being reintroduced. There's no way we could do on a daily or yearly basis the things we do without you."

Ranging from couples who test water quality to families who care for wildlife, roughly 112 volunteers and guests attended the event.

"We both care a lot about the environment," said Irlanda Helgen of Marshalltown, who attended the event with husband Bill. Both volunteer as water quality monitors. "We feel we have to contribute to nature as well as appreciate it."

The Keepers of the Land program handed out awards in six categories. IOWATER, a volunteer water quality testing program, honored five winners.

Ogden artist and creative consultant David Williamson addressed the group on volunteerism and the creative economy. Williamson, who incorporates recycling into his art, also presented a sculpture made from volunteer-collected trash.



"We're working one month a year longer now than we did in 1970," Williamson said in an address about creative thinking. "So much of that new work is creativity. If you get the creativity that you need for work replenished when you volunteer, then you will volunteer."

Williamson's 12-foot tall metal canoe paddle served as a backdrop for award winners. He forged the sculpture with metal dredged from Iowa waterways during this summer's Project A.W.A.R.E. (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition)-a DNR-organized river cleanup.

### Award Winners

- The DNR director's award distinction went to the Iowa Frog and Toad Call Survey-also selected as the group award winner. This 10-year-old project has called on over 100 volunteers to help monitor frog and toad populations by listening for different species' calls.

"It's a skeleton crew and a skeleton budget," nominator Mark McNroy said of the DNR's Wildlife Diversity program, which oversees the survey. "We require volunteer help. We're really grateful for their diligent work."

- Other award winners included Tom and Marvel Griffey and Warren Trotter in the individual category. The Griffeyes have volunteered as campground hosts at Walnut Woods State Park for 17 years, cleaning bathrooms, helping park patrons, and going "well beyond the expectations of a campground host," said Park Manager Tim Gedler.

Trotter has helped maintain the Volga River State Park for the past three years as a volunteer. Formerly a park employee, the retired electrical engineer elected to go off the payroll when he heard the park had to cut positions because of budget shortfalls.

- The youth award went to the Red Oak Middle School 7th Grade Life Sciences class and its "integrative learning program." Students use math, science, history, writing, art, geography and other disciplines to monitor and advocate water quality.
- Penny Close, Susan Barts, and the Friends of Guttenberg won the large project award for their efforts to save the Guttenberg aquarium. Volunteers raised money in part through an "adopt a critter" program for the beloved aquarium, which was in danger of closing.
- Craig Rubenking and Boy Scout Troop 30 earned first place in the small project category for creating three recycling centers at Walnut Woods State Park from old fence posts.
- DNR staff awards went to Big Creek State Park Manager Kim Olofson for his work overseeing volunteer prairie restorations and to geologist Lynette Seigly for her work with IOWATER.

"[Lynette] is one of the IOWATER do-everything people," said nominator Dave Ratliff. "I think it's about time Lynette gets recognized for who she is and what she does."

- IOWATER honored ISU professor Jim Colbert for involving students in natural resources volunteerism. The Arbor Lake water quality monitoring team won the watershed group of the year award, while the Winterset High School Science class won classroom of the year. The "Xstream Cleanup" effort, in which over 1500 volunteers removed 40 tons of garbage from Quad City waterways, won event of the year. IOWATER named Dave Ratliff of the Johnson and Iowa County Watershed Coalition volunteer of the year for his water quality testing work.